



# Parenting Separately Program

## Client Handbook

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## Welcome to Relationships Australia Tasmania

We want your experience with us to be a positive one and to make a positive difference in your life.

Relationships Australia Tasmania works with people to change and transform their lives through counselling, mediation, dispute resolution, support and training.

At Relationships Australia Tasmania we are:

- ✓ Client Centred
- ✓ Clear in our purpose and expectations
- ✓ Optimistic and hopeful
- ✓ Part of a collective effort
- ✓ Committed to outstanding service
- ✓ Professional and responsible

These values are demonstrated through positive client experience of services and a well-functioning organisation.

This handbook is intended to provide you with important information about using our Parenting orders Program.

If you would like to talk to someone about Relationships Australia Tasmania, or any of the information in this handbook, you can speak to our Intake worker by phoning 1300 364 277 or visit our website [www.tas.relationships.org.au](http://www.tas.relationships.org.au).

## Who we are

Relationships Australia Tasmania are a leading not-for-profit provider of relationship support services. We have a team of highly qualified professionals offering state-wide services including support to Tasmanian's living on the Islands.

We have 70 years of experience, helping over 8000 Tasmanians every year.

We have no religious affiliations. Our services are for all members of the community, regardless of religion, age, gender, sexual orientation, lifestyle choice, cultural background or economic circumstances.

We offer people the services and support they need, when they need it to assist them when life presents challenges. This may include relationships, work, past trauma or other personal challenges.

Relationships Australia Tasmania is a child safe organisation. We are committed to providing a safe and nurturing environment for children and young people. We recognise that children and young people can be vulnerable in a number of different ways, and we regard our responsibility for the safety and wellbeing of children as paramount in any decisions about their welfare.

Please find attached information for parents about safeguarding and several safeguarding policies. These are also available on our website and you can discuss any aspect of these documents with your practitioner or their manager.

## What you can expect from us

Anyone can contact Relationships Australia to discuss how they are dealing with separation issues, seek strategies to improve communication and decrease conflict.

The Parenting Orders Program is child focused, providing a safe and positive environment, for you to explore new effective ways of co-parenting. This program involves six individual sessions and a workshop series and comes from a psycho-educational framework.

Relationships Australia Tasmania is a child safe organisation and as such we are committed to protecting children and young people from harm. All our employees undergo an extensive screening process prior to appointment.

## The service pathway

Anyone can access the Parenting Orders Program by ringing Relationships Australia Tasmania, it is a free and confidential service.

Initially an intake appointment is booked, as part of this you will be asked to arrive 30 minutes prior to your appointment time to complete your registration forms and self-assessment (via an iPad). If you have any issues with literacy or feel you may need assistance with this, please let staff know at the time of booking. This informs the practitioner of important personal information which you may be asked further questions about during the appointment. You will also be asked to sign several forms such as Privacy and Confidentiality, if you have any questions about the paperwork you can discuss them in your appointment.

During your Intake appointment the practitioner will work with you to gather relevant details about your situation and reason for coming to Relationships Australia Tasmania. There will be in depth discussion about your current co-parenting relationship and how this is working.

You will be asked to sign a service agreement that outlines the rules and expectations for each parent when using the Parenting Orders Program. If there are current orders relating to your separation you will need to provide them at this appointment. This includes family violence orders, police family violence orders and/or court orders.

We recognise that separated parents experiencing conflict are best served by avoiding unexpected and unscheduled contact, particularly if there is a risk of family violence. Therefore, all appointments will be scheduled on different days to your ex-partner and you will be placed into separate workshops.

## Structure of the Parenting Orders Program

The Parenting Orders Program offers an opportunity for you to think deeply and reflectively on your co-parenting relationship and how this could be improved for the benefit of your child/ren. It covers a range of topics including:

- **Consider the children** – this aims to focus on the children's needs after separation. Practical tips on how to help you remain child focused and improve your parenting relationship despite the separation.
- **Resolving conflict** – this aims to increase your understanding of the effect conflict can have on children and how you can minimize or reduce conflict in your family.
- **Communication** – this looks at your communication with the other parent, recognizing what may be unhelpful and gives practical strategies to improve your communication.
- **Co-parenting after separation** – this examines different styles of parenting and discusses the importance of accountability and ownership of your parental relationship. This highlights the importance of your child developing and sustaining a good relationship with both parents.

- **Child development and separation** – this examines the emotional and developmental needs of children at different stages.
- **Moving forward** – this looks at where to from here with practical tips on problem solving, managing changeovers, introducing significant others and blending families.

These areas create the cornerstones of the Parenting Orders Program while still being able to tailor the program and hone in on the areas that are most effecting your situation. As part of the program you will be empowered, challenged at times and be asked to continually assess your situation and how you are managing it from the perspective of your child/ren. This is all done in a highly supportive and safe environment.

At the completion of the program (six individual sessions and the workshop series) you will be issued with a certificate acknowledging that you have completed the Program.

## **Other people being present during visits**

If you require a support person to attend sessions with you, this will need to be discussed with the practitioner prior to the appointment being conducted.

## **Breeches of service agreement**

At your initial intake appointment, you will be asked to sign a service agreement. This outlines the expectations of you while using the service. If this agreement is breeched, your service may be suspended or cancelled until further discussion with a manager.

## **Your Rights**

At Relationships Australia Tasmania we are committed to providing an outstanding service that meets the needs of our clients. This means offering a service that:

- Respects the uniqueness of you, your situation and your family
- Recognises your need and identity, with respect to culture, religion, gender, sexuality, language, disability or mental health
- Supports your access to an interpreter if required
- Respects your privacy and confidentiality, dignity and lifestyle
- Is inclusive and free from abuse, discrimination, neglect, force and favouritism
- Is in an environment that is safe, accessible, clean and secure
- Is engaging and empowering

In addition, we are committed to ensuring the safety, wellbeing and empowerment of children. This means:

- A zero-tolerance approach towards all forms of abuse, neglect and exploitation of children and young people
- Creation of child safe services and environments
- Engagement and empowerment of children and young people and their families
- Care, protection and support from all the adults involved in their lives

## Your Responsibilities

When you use a service you not only have rights, you also have some responsibilities. The responsibilities you have are towards all people that access our service including yourself, other clients and their children and staff. These responsibilities are:

- To respect the rights of others, such as their privacy and safety
- To help create a safe environment for all, free from harm and violence
- To tell us if you have any problems as soon as you can
- To help create a welcoming environment
- To pay fees as appropriate to your service

## Privacy and Confidentiality

We care about your privacy and confidentiality and are committed to protecting it.

When providing you with a service, we need to collect information about you and your circumstances. We will only do this when it is relevant to your service or it is required by law.

Our services are completely confidential. We will not give your name or any information about you to anyone outside Relationships Australia, unless someone's personal safety is at risk, or it is required by law.

In protecting your privacy, we must:

- Keep confidential all information we collect about you
- Respect your safety, privacy and dignity when using your information
- Protect information from any misuse or loss
- Take steps to ensure that the information we have about you is accurate, complete, up to date and relevant to the service you are accessing
- Not share your information with anyone else unless you have given clear written consent or if it is necessary to maintain your safety or otherwise required by law.

You have a right to:

- Complain if you feel we have not respected your privacy
- Know why and how your personal information is collected
- Know how your personal information is used, who it may be shared with and when
- Give or refuse consent before information is collected about you
- Ask for information or records to be explained or changed if you believe it is inaccurate, misleading, incomplete or out of date
- Request a copy of our Privacy and Confidentiality Policies

## Making a complaint and giving feedback

We want you to tell us what you think about your service. We know the best way for us to improve our services is to receive complaints or feedback for you. You have a right to:

- Make a complaint about the service you receive
- Be listened to respectfully
- Have your complaint kept private
- Have your complaint responded to fairly and in a timely manner

- Give feedback on what is working well or what could be improved at any time
- Be informed of what has happened with your complaint or feedback
- Be safe from negative consequences should you make a complaint

We will review all feedback and complaints to evaluate the quality of our services, identify what is and what is not working well, and consider how we can improve our services.

How can you make a complaint or provide feedback?

You can raise a complaint, compliment or give feedback to the Parenting Orders Program Practitioner, or their Manager.

Complaints and feedback can also be given via:

Our website: <http://www.tas.relationships.org.au/>

Phone: 1300 364 277

Or mail to:

20 Clare Street, New Town, 7008

6 Paterson Street, Launceston, 7250

68 North Fenton Street, Devonport, 7310